



Maricopa County Animal Care & Control Fact Sheet



Valley Fever Fungus

What is the Valley Fever Fungus?

Valley Fever is a fungus found in low desert regions of Arizona, New Mexico, parts of Texas and California.

Who gets it?

Valley Fever affects all mammals but is seen commonly in people and dogs. Cats are rarely affected. Similar to dogs; llamas, monkeys and apes are highly susceptible.

How is it spread?

Valley Fever is not contagious but is acquired from the environment by dogs and humans alike. Dogs contract Valley Fever by inhaling spores distributed by wind, construction and probably by digging and poking their curious noses in holes.

What are the symptoms?

Many dogs become infected with Valley Fever but do not become visibly ill while others can get very sick from the fungus. Early symptoms commonly associated with the primary disease are cough, fever, depression and lack of appetite. Symptoms typically occur about 3 weeks after the initial infection.

Primary disease is limited to the lungs and may go away on its own or the dog may get sick enough to require medication. Valley Fever can spread to other parts of the body in dogs. This is known as disseminated disease, and requires treatment for recovery in most cases. In disseminated disease, the bones and joints are the most frequent targets. In these cases, lameness is the most common symptom. The disease can invade any organ in the body, including the brain, often resulting in seizure.

How do you diagnose it?

Valley Fever can be diagnosed by blood test and cultures of affected tissues.

What is the treatment for animals?

Several different anti-fungal agents are available to treat Valley Fever. Often the treatment can take months to years and in rare cases treatment to control the disease may be life-long.

With adequate anti-fungal therapy, most dogs will recover from the disease. The vast majority will not need medication and will probably be immune to Valley Fever for the rest of their lives.

How do I reduce the risk of exposure?

- 1) Keep your pets indoors when not supervised.
- 2) Avoid outdoor activity in locations with high dust.
- 3) Be aware of your pet's behavior at all times. If he starts acting differently, take him to the veterinarian immediately.

For more information on animal care, behavior or AC&C programs contact (602) 506-PETS or visit pets.maricopa.gov

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